DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 109 462 CE 004 316

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TITLE Career Education: A Crusade for Change.
PUB DATE 14 Nov 74
NOTE 15p.; Paper presented to the Nebraska School Boards Association (Lincoln, Nebraska, November 14, 1974)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.76 HC-$1.58 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS *Career Education; *Educational Innovation; *Educational Needs; *Educational Objectives; Educational Philosophy; Educational Principles; Educational Programs; Employment; Family School Relationship; Job Satisfaction; Need Gratification; Relevance (Education); School Community Relationship; Self Actualization; Speeches

ABSTRACT

Although initially it was wise for local, State, and national debate and action to forge a definition of career education, the time has come to identify the common threads in career education implementation in ways that are clear to the general public. The need to clarify and emphasize relationships between education and work for all persons and the need to make work a more meaningful part of the total lifestyle of all persons lie behind the career education movement. Career education itself can be defined as all the activities implied in the two words through which one learns about and prepares oneself for work, the conscious effort aimed at producing benefits for oneself and/or career education. Infusion signifies attempts within the educational system itself to make education a preparation for work. Collaboration designates the cooperative effort between the educational system, the business-labor-industry-professional-government community, and the home and family structure. Problems of cost and obstacles to success, if approached with flexibility and optimism, can be favorably resolved. (Author/JR)

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ED109462

MAY 20 1975

CAREER EDUCATION: A CRUSADE FOR CHANGE

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CE004316

Paper presented to the Nebraska School Boards Association
Lincoln, Nebraska - November 14, 1974

Introduction

It has been only four years since former USOE Commissioner of Education Sidney P. Marland, Jr. coined the term "career education." Since that time, the concept has swept the country. At a recent USOE career education conference, 46 state departments of education and 5 of the 6 trust territories plus the District of Columbia sent representatives. Nine state legislatures have passed career education legislation. Hundreds of publications on career education have been produced and distributed. At least 10 major national associations have endorsed career education. Career education programs have been initiated in almost one-third of the nation's 17,000 school districts. Career Education has been endorsed by both of the USOE Commissioners of Education - Dr. John O. Ottina and Dr. Terrel H. Bell - who have followed Dr. Marland in occupying that position. When P.L. 93-380 was passed and signed into law, in August, 1974, career education became, for the first time in history, a mandate of the Congress of the United States. In October, 1974, the United States Office of Education published an official policy paper on career education. Never has a call for educational change been adopted so fast in so many places with so few Federal dollars. In this sense, career education has truly broken all records.

In my opinion, Dr. Marland acted wisely in refusing to provide a single USOE definition of career education when he coined the term. Instead, he called for the meaning of career education to be forged in local, state, and national debate and actions. As a result, career

education has been defined in a wide variety of ways by widely diverse segments of our society. It has sometimes seemed as though career education is viewed as an answer to almost any problem anyone could see facing American Education. For awhile, career education seemed to be perceived as a panacea for all the ills of our educational system. This was dangerous and unwise. That is, anything regarded as a panacea is almost surely doomed to become a matter of over promise and under delivery.

Fortunately, some strong and common threads seem to be evolving with reference to the need for, nature of, and methods to be utilized in implementing career education. It is time that these common threads be identified and discussed in ways that are clear to the general public. Career education is a crusade for change in our entire system of American Education. Unlike some previous calls for change, career education's crusade cannot succeed if only educators are involved in the effort. The changes called for by career education involve the broader community as well as the system of education. The public has a right to know and a responsibility to act in the career education concept.

In attempting to provide such knowledge as a basis for action, three topics must be considered: (a) the need for career education; (b) the nature of career education; (c) the actions required for implementation of career education. The remainder of this presentation will be devoted to a discussion of these three topics.

The Need For Career Education

Two basic, and related societal needs lie behind the career education movement. One is the need to clarify and emphasize relationships between education and work for all persons. The second is the need to make work a

more meaningful part of the total lifestyle of all persons. Each of these needs can be pictured in terms of both society as a whole and in terms of individuals in the society.

American Education has produced a relatively few individuals whose efforts have changed the entire occupational structure. The rise of technology has increased the need for persons with specific occupational skills and dramatically reduced the need for unskilled labor. In addition, and equally important, it has resulted in a rapid rise in the rate of change in the occupational system. As a result, youth are faced with two problems which, to many, must appear to be contradictory in nature. First, they are told they must acquire some of occupational skills that can be used to enter the labor market. Second, they are told they must have adaptability skills that will enable them to change with further changes in the world of paid employment. It is no wonder that many appear confused and uncertain.

American education had done a good job in preparing a minority of its students both to cope with change and to be productive contributors to still greater change. We have not done a good job for the vast majority of our students - including many of our college graduates as well as many who leave the educational system at earlier levels. For the great majority of students, American Education's prime contribution seems to have been simply lengthening the number of years of schooling. While this has delayed, for most youth, the time at which they seek to enter the labor market, it has not helped greatly in the transition from school to work. One does not solve a problem by delaying the time at which the problem is faced.

The results of American Education's failure to clarify and emphasize relationships between education and work are apparent to all. They can be seen in the sickening stability of the ratio of youth to adult employment remaining at a level of 3 to 1. They can be seen in the complaints of employers that youth seeking jobs possess neither the basic academic skills, good work habits, or positive work attitudes that make for productive employees. They can be seen in the large numbers of youth who can see no relationships between what they learn in school and what they will do when they leave school. They can be seen in the large numbers of adults who, when faced with the need to change occupations, find themselves unequipped for doing so. In all these ways, the past failure of American Education to help all students understand and prepare for relationships between education and work are obvious. The need to change is equally obvious.

Important as it is, the need to clarify and act on the increasingly close relationships between education and work represents only the tip of the iceberg of needed change. At a deeper level, both employers and employees - both youth and adult - both paid and volunteer workers - seem to be looking for greater meaning and meaningfulness from work as part of their total lifestyle. Productivity, expressed as output per man hour, has become a matter of national and international concern. Too many workers seem to endure their jobs rather than gain personal satisfaction from their work. They come to work as late as possible, do as little as possible, and look forward to the time the work day is over. The result is described in the popular literature as "worker alienation." Debate continues regarding whether worker alienation is due to worker qualities or job conditions.

The answer, of course, is that both have been involved. There is a crying need to curtail the debate and move toward solution. Career education is part of that movement toward solution.

The proportion of one's life spent in paid employment is declining. As this occurs, the need for individuals to find meaning and meaningfulness in their leisure time increases. It is especially important for those who fail to find such meaningfulness in the world of paid employment. Yet, far too many seem to be regarding the word "leisure" as synonomous with the word "play". Persons with nothing to do very seldom do nothing. It seems obvious that many of our current societal problems have stemmed from our unwillingness and/or inability to concentrate attention on how to help individuals gain a greater sense of self worth and meaning through their leisure time. Career education also seeks to contribute to solutions to these problems.

The Nature of Career Education

The core of the career education concept is centered around a four letter word - "work". There is consensus, though far from universal agreement, among career education leaders at the local, state, and national levels that this is so. The negative connotations associated with the word "work", in the minds of many, make it essential that its meaning, as used in career education, be discussed here.

"Work" is conscious effort, other than activities whose primary purpose is either coping or relaxation, aimed at producing benefits for oneself and/or for oneself and others. In this context, the word "work" is distinguished from the word "labor" by the fact that it represents a purpose chosen by the

individual. This definition can be used to cover the world of paid employment. It also applies to the work of the full-time homemaker, the volunteer worker, work performed as part of one's leisure time, and the work of the student as a learner. Its key words are "conscious", "effort", "producing", and "benefits".

The single most important understanding to be derived from this definition is its implications of personal meaningfulness for the individual. This is rooted in the basic human need of all human beings to become someone through doing something. It is the need to do - to achieve - to accomplish that is emphasized in this definition.

The word "work", as defined here, is not a societal obligation. Rather, it is more correctly viewed as a human right of all human beings. In a very real sense, it is the right of each individual to discover both who she or he is and why she or he exists through what she or he is able to accomplish. It is obviously related both to society's need for productivity and the individual's need for a personal meaningfulness in life. As used in career education, "work" is a good word - an individual opportunity, not a societal burden.

In career education, the word "career" is defined as the totality of work one does in his or her lifetime. Thus, the "careers" of most persons begin prior to entering kindergarten and continue well into the retirement years. One can change occupations, jobs, or positions, but one's "career" doesn't change. Rather, it evolves and develops.

In career education, the word "education" is defined as the totality of activities and experiences through which one learns. While it includes "schooling", it extends beyond what is learned in a formal classroom setting through the efforts of persons called "teachers".

Thus, "career education" itself can be generically defined as a combination of the two words "career" and "education" to mean all of those activities and experiences through which one learns about and prepares oneself for work.

The societal goals of career education are to help each individual want to work, acquire the skills necessary for work, and engage in work that is satisfying to the individual and beneficial for society. The individualistic goals of career education are to make work possible, meaningful, and satisfying for each individual. Viewed from either a societal or from an individualistic sense, "work" is the central core of the career education concept.

Implementing Career Education

Two key words - "infusion" and "collaboration" - underlie efforts to implement career education. The word "infusion" is used to represent attempts, within the formal system of Education, to make education, as preparation for work, both a prominent and a permanent goal of all who teach and of all who learn. The word "collaboration" is used to represent involvement among educators, the business-labor-industry-professional-government community, and the home and family structure in career education. Both words correctly imply a number of major and significant changes.

Infusion changes - those internal within the education system itself - take many forms. They include the following:

a. A change, beginning in the elementary school and continuing through college education, toward emphasizing career implications of subject matter. Hopefully, this will motivate students to learn more subject matter - including the basic skills of reading,

mathematics, and communication.

b. A change, beginning in the elementary school and continuing through college education, toward emphasizing good work habits - including good study habits. Hopefully, such an emphasis will contribute both to increasing academic achievement and to the use of good work habits in work done after leaving the education system.

c. A change beginning in the elementary school and continuing through college education, toward emphasizing the process of career development - including career awareness, career exploration, career motivation, career decision making, career preparation, and career entry. Hopefully, this will increase career options for all students and lead toward more reasoned career decisions.

d. A change, beginning in the elementary school and continuing through college education, toward using performance evaluation as one means of measuring student accomplishments. Hopefully, this will aid the student in discovering what she or he can do and has done - how she or he has succeeded as a result of work. This, in turn, should help make work a more personally meaningful experience for each student and, as a result, help each student clarify her or his own personal work values.

e. A change, beginning in the secondary school and continuing through postsecondary education, toward recognizing the need to increase the quantity, quality, and variety of vocational and technical education options offered all students. Hopefully, this will put our educational offerings more in line with real occupational opportunities. Additionally, it should help in

opening up opportunities for college-bound students to sample vocational education offerings and for vocational education students to elect some courses typically reserved for the college bound. This should, in turn, greatly reduce tracking.

These kinds of changes should make it clear that career education is for all students, that it is not limited to the K-12 levels of education, and that it will demand changes in the operational patterns and attitudes of all educators. Important as these changes are, they will not, by themselves, result in effective career education unless a set of collaborative activities are added to these kinds of infusion efforts.

Among the collaborative efforts needed between the education system and the business-labor-industry-professional-government community, the following are particularly crucial and important:

a. A change, beginning in the elementary school and continuing through college education, toward using personnel from the world of work outside of education as resource persons in the classroom and as consultants to educational personnel. Hopefully, this will help both teachers and students become more aware of the world of work, the career implications of subject matter, and of the wide variety of work values currently operating in our society.

b. A change, beginning in the elementary school and continuing through college education, toward providing observational, work experience, and work-study opportunities to students and to those who educate students - to teachers, counselors, and school administrators. Hopefully, this will create a "third world" for students that will provide them with the kinds of knowledge and

experiences that will allow them to make a more effective transition from the world of schooling to the world of work outside education.

c. A change, beginning in the secondary school and continuing through college education, toward establishing and operating, in collaboration with school personnel, job placement programs for school leavers. This includes the use of personnel from the world of work outside of education in teaching students job seeking, job getting, and job holding skills. Hopefully, this will provide some help in reducing the current high rate of youth unemployment.

The home and family structure represents a critical and crucial part of the collaborative effort required for effective career education. Much of career education's concerns center around student attitudes, work values, and career decisions. These are matters that are, and should be, heavily influenced by parents. Among the many ways in which we ask parents to join this collaborative effort, the following are especially important:

a. A change, beginning in the elementary school and continuing at least through Grade 12, toward using parents as role models for particular occupational life styles through their presence in the classroom and/or through materials and information they supply for use in the classroom. Hopefully, in addition to providing valuable information, this will also help parents view themselves and their work in a more positive light. This, in turn, should help parents visit with their children in a more positive fashion about work.

b. A change, beginning in the elementary school and continuing at least through Grade 12, toward helping both parents and children view the home as, in part, a kind of work place - as a place where

all family members work, not just the mother. Hopefully, this will illustrate and reenforce the kinds of good work habits and positive work values school career education programs seek to provide. At the very least, it should help avoid negating the school's efforts.

c. A change, beginning in the elementary school and continuing at least through Grade 12, toward involving parents to a greater degree and in a more positive fashion in the career development of their children. This includes encouraging students to discuss career problems and tentative career choices with their parents as well as encouraging more contacts between parents and career guidance personnel in the schools. Hopefully, this will enable schools, parents, and students to work together in expanding career options open to students in ways that will protect freedom of choice for students and avoid forcing any premature occupational decisions.

d. A change, beginning in the elementary school and continuing at least through Grade 12, toward involving parents and school personnel in emphasizing the constructive and positive values of work in one's leisure time. Hopefully, this, too, will help students in the process of full career development.

These three elements of society - the formal educational system, the business-labor-industry-professional-government community, and the home and family structure - must collaborate if the need for and the promises of career education are to be fulfilled. Hopefully, in every community, there will be established a Community Career Education Coordinating Council charged with policy decisions for career education. Representation should be present

from all three of these societal elements. It will be particularly crucial that students themselves are represented on this Council.

Concluding Remarks

Two practical questions remain: (a) How much will it cost? and (b) What are its chances of working? A few comments on both questions is in order here.

There is no doubt but that career education will cost some money. The largest single cost will be inservice education of educational personnel. The second largest cost will be for someone to "ramrod" the career education effort. Other costs will include those for materials, for the kinds of collaborative efforts I have described, and for financial assistance needed by low-income persons in order to implement their career decisions. Whether such costs represent additions to the education budget or a re-alignment of existing budgets is a question yet to be answered in any single fashion.

The greatest cost required for career education is not measured in dollars. Rather, it will be measured in effort and commitments on the part of those who work to make career education effective. Surely, it will take time and that does represent a cost. How we each choose to spend our time and energies is the really crucial question of cost facing career education.

Will career education work? The answer will obviously vary from place to place. No one ever said it will be easy - and it won't be. No one ever said that all teachers, all businessmen, all parents, or all students will endorse or participate in a career education effort. It will be easy for each of us to immediately think of many individuals we know who are very unlikely to participate effectively in career education. If we build our plans around probable failures, our chances for success are very small indeed.

I would rather build plans on a positive basis by looking for resources to make it work rather than obstacles that will prevent it from working.

Finally, no one has said that, if implemented fully and effectively, youth problems of transition from school to work would disappear. We have said that career education can make a positive contribution toward solving such problems. If given a chance, it will help some. I am convinced of that. I ask that you give it that chance.